

IN THE WATER COURT OF THE STATE OF MONTANA  
YELLOWSTONE DIVISION  
LITTLE MISSOURI RIVER BASIN ABOVE LITTLE BEAVER CREEK (39F)  
PRELIMINARY DECREE

\*\*\*\*\*

CLAIMANT: Thomas Ranch Inc.

**CASE 39F-0107-R-2022**

39F 27553-00

39F 176114-00

39F 176124-00

39F 176141-00

39F 176144-00

**NOTICE OF FILING OF MASTER'S REPORT**

This Master's Report was filed with the Montana Water Court on the above stamped date. Please review this report carefully.

You may file a written objection to this Master's Report within **10 days** of the stamped date if you disagree or find errors with the Master's findings of fact, conclusions of law, or recommendations. Rule 23, W.R.Adj.R. If the Master's Report was mailed to you, the Montana Rules of Civil Procedure allow an additional 3 days to be added to the 10-day objection period. Rule 6(d), M.R.Civ.P. If you file an objection, you must serve a copy of the objection to all parties on the service list found at the end of the Master's Report. The original objection and a certificate of mailing to all parties on the service list must be filed with the Water Court.

If you do not file a timely objection, the Water Court will conclude that you agree with the content of this Master's Report.

**MASTER'S REPORT**

Water Right Claim 39F 27553-00, 39F 176114-00, 39F 176124-00, 39F 176141-00, and 39F 176144-00 appeared in the Preliminary Decree for the Little Missouri River,

above Little Beaver Creek (Basin 39F). These claims received issue remarks. Issue remarks result from Department of Natural Resources and Conservation (“DNRC”) claims examination or by Water Court order. Claims examination confirms the historical use of water right claims and identifies issues with claims. If claims examination cannot confirm some aspect of a claim, an issue remark is added to the claim. These claims did not receive any objections or notices of intent to appear.

The Court consolidated these claims into Water Court Case 39F-0107-R-2023 on January 18, 2022. The consolidation order set a filing deadline by which Claimant was to file information resolving the issue remarks. The Court did not receive any response by the filing deadline. The Court set a second filing deadline for this purpose on October 14, 2022. The Court again did not receive a response.

### **FINDINGS OF FACT**

1. Claim 39F 27553-00 appeared with the following issue remarks:

POINT OF DIVERSION AND RESERVOIR RECORD WERE MODIFIED AS A RESULT OF DNRC REVIEW UNDER MONTANA WATER COURT REEXAMINATION ORDERS. IF NO OBJECTIONS ARE FILED TO THIS CLAIM, THESE ELEMENTS WILL REMAIN AS THEY APPEAR ON THIS ABSTRACT AND THE REMARK WILL BE REMOVED FROM THE CLAIM.

THE PLACE OF USE APPEARS TO NEED MODIFICATION BASED ON THE DNRC CORRECTION TO THE POINT OF DIVERSION. THE CORRECT PLACE OF USE LEGAL LAND DESCRIPTION APPEARS TO BE THE NENESE SEC 11 TWP 7S RGE 61E CARTER COUNTY.

2. Claim 39F 176114-00 appeared with the following issue remarks:

THE CLAIMANT DID NOT IDENTIFY THE PERIOD OF DIVERSION FOR THIS RIGHT. A PERIOD OF DIVERSION HAS BEEN ADDED TO MATCH THE PERIOD OF USE. IF NO OBJECTIONS ARE RECEIVED TO THE PERIOD OF DIVERSION OR PERIOD OF USE, THOSE ELEMENTS WILL BE DECREED AS SHOWN ON THIS ABSTRACT AND THIS ISSUE REMARK WILL BE REMOVED FROM THIS CLAIM.

RESERVOIR RECORD AND POINT OF DIVERSION WERE MODIFIED AS A RESULT OF DNRC REVIEW UNDER MONTANA WATER COURT REEXAMINATION ORDERS. IF NO OBJECTIONS ARE FILED TO THIS CLAIM, THESE ELEMENTS WILL REMAIN AS

THEY APPEAR ON THIS ABSTRACT AND THE REMARK WILL BE REMOVED FROM THE CLAIM.

THE CLAIMED VOLUME APPEARS TO BE EXCESSIVE FOR THE CLAIMED PURPOSE. THE CLAIMED VOLUME EQUALS 40 TIMES THE CAPACITY OF THE RESERVOIR.

3. Claim 39F 176124-00 appeared with the following issue remark:

IT APPEARS THAT THE PROPER LEGAL DESCRIPTION FOR PLACE OF USE PARCEL 004 IS 5.00 ACRES, GOVT LOT 1, NW SEC 07, TWP 07S, RGE 62E, CARTER COUNTY.

4. Claim 39F 176141-00 appeared with the following issue remark:

THE MEANS OF DIVERSION APPEARS TO BE INCORRECT. THE MEANS OF DIVERSION APPEARS TO BE A DAM.

5. Claim 39F 176144-00 appeared with the following issue remark:

POINT OF DIVERSION, MEANS OF DIVERSION, AND RESERVOIR RECORD WERE MODIFIED AS A RESULT OF DNRC REVIEW UNDER MONTANA WATER COURT REEXAMINATION ORDERS. IF NO OBJECTIONS ARE FILED TO THIS CLAIM, THESE ELEMENTS WILL REMAIN AS THEY APPEAR ON THIS ABSTRACT AND THE REMARK WILL BE REMOVED FROM THE CLAIM.

THE PLACE OF USE APPEARS TO NEED MODIFICATION BASED ON THE DNRC CORRECTION TO THE POINT OF DIVERSION. THE CORRECT PLACE OF USE LEGAL LAND DESCRIPTION APPEARS TO BE THE NENESE SEC 15 TWP 7S RGE 60E CARTER COUNTY.

6. The place of use of Claim 39F 27553-00 should be described as NENESW of Section 11, T7S, R61E to match the point of diversion for this onstream stock reservoir.

7. Claim 39F 176114-00 is for a direct flow water spreading system. These systems divert water whenever it is available and do not typically utilize stored water. The size of a reservoir as compared to the claimed volume is not always applicable to these systems when determining whether a claimed volume is excessive.

8. Place of Use No. 4 of Claim 39F 176124-00 should be described as Govt Lot 1, NW of section 7, T7S, R62E.

9. The place of use of Claim 39F 176144-00 should be described as NENESE of Section 15, T7S, R60E to match the point of diversion for this onstream stock reservoir.

10. The issue remarks should be removed from each above-captioned claim.

### **APPLICABLE LAW**

1. A properly filed statement of claim is prima facie proof of its content. Section 85-2-227, MCA. The prima facie status of a claim may be overcome by a preponderance of the evidence. Section 85-2-227, MCA; Rule 19, W.R.Adj.R. A preponderance of the evidence is evidence that shows a fact is “more probable than not.” *Hohenlohe v. State*, 2010 MT 203, ¶ 33, 357 Mont. 438, 240 P.3d 628.

2. The Water Court must weigh an issue remark, and the information resulting in that issue remark, against the claimed water right. Section 85-2-247(2), MCA.

3. The Water Court must resolve all issue remarks not resolved through the objection process. Section 85-2-248, MCA. The Court must review information in the claim file or obtained by the Court to determine if there is a sufficient basis to resolve the remarks. 85-2-248(3), MCA.

### **CONCLUSIONS OF LAW**

1. The changes described in the Findings of Fact may be made because the evidence in the record overcomes the prima facie status of the claim by a preponderance of the evidence.

2. The evidence in the record and the proposed changes provide the Court with a sufficient basis to resolve and remove the issue remarks from each above-captioned claim.

3. Claim 176141-00 may be decreed without substantive modifications because the issue remark does not overcome the prima facie status of the claim.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

Based upon the above Findings of Fact and Conclusions of Law, this Master recommends that the Court make the changes specified in the Findings of Fact to correct the Preliminary Decree for this Basin. Post-decree Abstracts of Water Right Claims are

served with this Report to confirm the recommended changes have been made in the state's centralized record system.

**ELECTRONICALLY SIGNED AND DATED BELOW.**

**Service via USPS Mail:**

Thomas Ranch Inc.  
2451 Little Missouri Rd  
Belle Fourche, SD 57717

**POST DECREE**  
**ABSTRACT OF WATER RIGHT CLAIM**  
**LITTLE MISSOURI RIVER, ABOVE LITTLE BEAVER CREEK**  
**BASIN 39F**

**Water Right Number:** 39F 27553-00 STATEMENT OF CLAIM

**Version:** 3 -- POST DECREE

**Status:** ACTIVE

**Owners:** THOMAS RANCH INC  
2451 LITTLE MISSOURI RD  
BELLE FOURCHE, SD 57717

**Priority Date:** OCTOBER 10, 1969

**Type of Historical Right:** USE

**Purpose (use):** STOCK

**Flow Rate:** A SPECIFIC FLOW RATE HAS NOT BEEN DECREED FOR THIS USE FROM THIS ONSTREAM RESERVOIR. THE FLOW RATE IS LIMITED TO THE MINIMUM AMOUNT HISTORICALLY NECESSARY TO SUSTAIN THIS PURPOSE.

**Volume:** THIS RIGHT INCLUDES THE AMOUNT OF WATER CONSUMPTIVELY USED FOR STOCK WATERING PURPOSES AT THE RATE OF 30 GALLONS PER DAY PER ANIMAL UNIT. ANIMAL UNITS SHALL BE BASED ON REASONABLE CARRYING CAPACITY AND HISTORICAL USE OF THE AREA SERVICED BY THIS WATER SOURCE.

**Source Name:** UNNAMED TRIBUTARY OF LITTLE MISSOURI RIVER

**Source Type:** SURFACE WATER

**Point of Diversion and Means of Diversion:**

<u>ID</u>	<u>Govt Lot</u>	<u>Qtr Sec</u>	<u>Sec</u>	<u>Twp</u>	<u>Rge</u>	<u>County</u>
1		NENESE	11	7S	61E	CARTER

**Period of Diversion:** JANUARY 1 TO DECEMBER 31

**Diversion Means:** DAM

**Reservoir:** ONSTREAM

<u>Govt Lot</u>	<u>Qtr Sec</u>	<u>Sec</u>	<u>Twp</u>	<u>Rge</u>	<u>County</u>
	NENESE	11	7S	61E	CARTER

**Diversion to Reservoir:** DIVERSION # 1

**Period of Use:** JANUARY 1 TO DECEMBER 31

**Place of Use:**

<u>ID</u>	<u>Acres</u>	<u>Govt Lot</u>	<u>Qtr Sec</u>	<u>Sec</u>	<u>Twp</u>	<u>Rge</u>	<u>County</u>
1			NENESE	11	7S	61E	CARTER

**POST DECREE**  
**ABSTRACT OF WATER RIGHT CLAIM**  
**LITTLE MISSOURI RIVER, ABOVE LITTLE BEAVER CREEK**  
**BASIN 39F**

**Water Right Number:** 39F 176114-00 STATEMENT OF CLAIM

**Version:** 3 -- POST DECREE

**Status:** ACTIVE

**Owners:** THOMAS RANCH INC  
2451 LITTLE MISSOURI RD  
BELLE FOURCHE, SD 57717

**Priority Date:** DECEMBER 17, 1903

**Type of Historical Right:** FILED

**Purpose (use):** IRRIGATION

**Irrigation Type:** WATER SPREADING

**Flow Rate:** A SPECIFIC FLOW RATE HAS NOT BEEN DECREED BECAUSE THIS USE CONSISTS OF DIRECT FLOW WATER SPREADING.

**Volume:** 480.00 AC-FT

**Climatic Area:** 2 - MODERATELY HIGH

**\*Maximum Acres:** 272.50

**Source Name:** UNNAMED TRIBUTARY OF LITTLE MISSOURI RIVER

**Source Type:** SURFACE WATER

**Point of Diversion and Means of Diversion:**

<u>ID</u>	<u>Govt Lot</u>	<u>Qtr Sec</u>	<u>Sec</u>	<u>Twp</u>	<u>Rge</u>	<u>County</u>
1		NWNWSE	5	7S	62E	CARTER

**Period of Diversion:** JANUARY 1 TO DECEMBER 31

**Diversion Means:** DAM

**Reservoir:** ONSTREAM

<u>Govt Lot</u>	<u>Qtr Sec</u>	<u>Sec</u>	<u>Twp</u>	<u>Rge</u>	<u>County</u>
	NWNWSE	5	7S	62E	CARTER

**Diversion to Reservoir:** DIVERSION # 1

**Dam Height:** 13.00 FEET

**Depth:** 10.00 FEET

**Surface Area:** 3.00 ACRES

**Capacity:** 12.00 ACRE-FEET

THE DAM EXTENDS INTO THE NENESW , NENWSE SEC 5 TWP 7S RGE 62E CARTER COUNTY.

**Period of Use:** JANUARY 1 TO DECEMBER 31

**\*Place of Use:**

<u>ID</u>	<u>Acres</u>	<u>Govt Lot</u>	<u>Qtr Sec</u>	<u>Sec</u>	<u>Twp</u>	<u>Rge</u>	<u>County</u>
1	42.50		W2NE	5	7S	62E	CARTER
2	15.00		W2SE	32	6S	62E	CARTER
3	135.00		SW	32	6S	62E	CARTER

4	80.00	NW	5	7S	62E	CARTER
<b>Total:</b>	<u>272.50</u>					



**POST DECREE**  
**ABSTRACT OF WATER RIGHT CLAIM**  
**LITTLE MISSOURI RIVER, ABOVE LITTLE BEAVER CREEK**  
**BASIN 39F**

**Water Right Number:** 39F 176124-00 STATEMENT OF CLAIM

**Version:** 3 -- POST DECREE

**Status:** ACTIVE

**Owners:** THOMAS RANCH INC  
2451 LITTLE MISSOURI RD  
BELLE FOURCHE, SD 57717

**Priority Date:** AUGUST 12, 1908

**Type of Historical Right:** FILED

**Purpose (use):** IRRIGATION

**Irrigation Type:** WATER SPREADING

**Flow Rate:** A SPECIFIC FLOW RATE HAS NOT BEEN DECREED BECAUSE THIS USE CONSISTS OF DIRECT FLOW WATER SPREADING.

**Volume:** 120.00 AC-FT

**Climatic Area:** 2 - MODERATELY HIGH

**\*Maximum Acres:** 85.00

**Source Name:** UNNAMED TRIBUTARY OF ELKHORN CREEK

**Source Type:** SURFACE WATER

**Point of Diversion and Means of Diversion:**

<u>ID</u>	<u>Govt Lot</u>	<u>Qtr Sec</u>	<u>Sec</u>	<u>Twp</u>	<u>Rge</u>	<u>County</u>
1		SESESE	1	7S	61E	CARTER

**Period of Diversion:** JANUARY 1 TO DECEMBER 31

**Diversion Means:** DIKE

**Period of Use:** JANUARY 1 TO DECEMBER 31

**\*Place of Use:**

<u>ID</u>	<u>Acres</u>	<u>Govt Lot</u>	<u>Qtr Sec</u>	<u>Sec</u>	<u>Twp</u>	<u>Rge</u>	<u>County</u>
1	60.00		S2SW	6	7S	62E	CARTER
2	15.00		SWSE	6	7S	62E	CARTER
3	5.00		N2SW	6	7S	62E	CARTER
4	5.00	1	NW	7	7S	62E	CARTER

**Total:** 85.00

**POST DECREE**  
**ABSTRACT OF WATER RIGHT CLAIM**  
**LITTLE MISSOURI RIVER, ABOVE LITTLE BEAVER CREEK**  
**BASIN 39F**

**Water Right Number:** 39F 176141-00 STATEMENT OF CLAIM  
**Version:** 3 -- POST DECREE  
**Status:** ACTIVE

**Owners:** THOMAS RANCH INC  
2451 LITTLE MISSOURI RD  
BELLE FOURCHE, SD 57717

**Priority Date:** DECEMBER 3, 1956

**Type of Historical Right:** USE

**Purpose (use):** STOCK

**Flow Rate:** A SPECIFIC FLOW RATE HAS NOT BEEN DECREED FOR THIS USE FROM THIS ONSTREAM RESERVOIR. THE FLOW RATE IS LIMITED TO THE MINIMUM AMOUNT HISTORICALLY NECESSARY TO SUSTAIN THIS PURPOSE.

**Volume:** THIS RIGHT INCLUDES THE AMOUNT OF WATER CONSUMPTIVELY USED FOR STOCK WATERING PURPOSES AT THE RATE OF 30 GALLONS PER DAY PER ANIMAL UNIT. ANIMAL UNITS SHALL BE BASED ON REASONABLE CARRYING CAPACITY AND HISTORICAL USE OF THE AREA SERVICED BY THIS WATER SOURCE.

**\*Source Name:** UNNAMED TRIBUTARY OF LITTLE MISSOURI RIVER

**Source Type:** SURFACE WATER

**\*Point of Diversion and Means of Diversion:**

<u>ID</u>	<u>Govt Lot</u>	<u>Qtr Sec</u>	<u>Sec</u>	<u>Twp</u>	<u>Rge</u>	<u>County</u>
1		NENESE	27	6S	61E	CARTER

**Period of Diversion:** JANUARY 1 TO DECEMBER 31

**Diversion Means:** PIT

**Reservoir:** ONSTREAM

<u>Govt Lot</u>	<u>Qtr Sec</u>	<u>Sec</u>	<u>Twp</u>	<u>Rge</u>	<u>County</u>
	NENESE	27	6S	61E	CARTER

**Diversion to Reservoir:** DIVERSION # 1

**Period of Use:** JANUARY 1 TO DECEMBER 31

**\*Place of Use:**

<u>ID</u>	<u>Acres</u>	<u>Govt Lot</u>	<u>Qtr Sec</u>	<u>Sec</u>	<u>Twp</u>	<u>Rge</u>	<u>County</u>
1			NENESE	27	6S	61E	CARTER

**POST DECREE**  
**ABSTRACT OF WATER RIGHT CLAIM**  
**LITTLE MISSOURI RIVER, ABOVE LITTLE BEAVER CREEK**  
**BASIN 39F**

**Water Right Number:** 39F 176144-00 STATEMENT OF CLAIM

**Version:** 3 -- POST DECREE

**Status:** ACTIVE

**Owners:** THOMAS RANCH INC  
2451 LITTLE MISSOURI RD  
BELLE FOURCHE, SD 57717

**Priority Date:** DECEMBER 3, 1956

**Type of Historical Right:** USE

**Purpose (use):** STOCK

**Flow Rate:** A SPECIFIC FLOW RATE HAS NOT BEEN DECREED FOR THIS USE FROM THIS ONSTREAM RESERVOIR. THE FLOW RATE IS LIMITED TO THE MINIMUM AMOUNT HISTORICALLY NECESSARY TO SUSTAIN THIS PURPOSE.

**Volume:** THIS RIGHT INCLUDES THE AMOUNT OF WATER CONSUMPTIVELY USED FOR STOCK WATERING PURPOSES AT THE RATE OF 30 GALLONS PER DAY PER ANIMAL UNIT. ANIMAL UNITS SHALL BE BASED ON REASONABLE CARRYING CAPACITY AND HISTORICAL USE OF THE AREA SERVICED BY THIS WATER SOURCE.

**Source Name:** UNNAMED TRIBUTARY OF NORTH BUTTE CREEK

**Source Type:** SURFACE WATER

**Point of Diversion and Means of Diversion:**

<u>ID</u>	<u>Govt Lot</u>	<u>Qtr Sec</u>	<u>Sec</u>	<u>Twp</u>	<u>Rge</u>	<u>County</u>
1		NENESE	15	7S	60E	CARTER

**Period of Diversion:** JANUARY 1 TO DECEMBER 31

**Diversion Means:** DAM

**Reservoir:** ONSTREAM

<u>Govt Lot</u>	<u>Qtr Sec</u>	<u>Sec</u>	<u>Twp</u>	<u>Rge</u>	<u>County</u>
	NENESE	15	7S	60E	CARTER

**Diversion to Reservoir:** DIVERSION # 1

**Period of Use:** JANUARY 1 TO DECEMBER 31

**Place of Use:**

<u>ID</u>	<u>Acres</u>	<u>Govt Lot</u>	<u>Qtr Sec</u>	<u>Sec</u>	<u>Twp</u>	<u>Rge</u>	<u>County</u>
1			NENESE	15	7S	60E	CARTER